are differences of opinion in regard to the value of working plans. The several other matters referred to in your speech will receive due consideration. Most of your observations were directed against Mr. Raman Menon's administration of the Department. You have also criticised the concluding sentence in the Government review on the Forest Administration Report for 1096. Mr. Raman Menon is now going away, and I must say, in fairness to him, that a verdict cannot be passed on his work without looking into all aspects of it, nor do I think it fair on your part to say that, in making the remarks contained in the last sentence of their review of the work of the Department for 1096, Government had an ulterior motive.

18. The assignment of wet lands and Eata forests for paddy cultivation.

Mr. Kuriyan Unnittan (Member, Pattanamtitta Taluk) began by saying that nearly one-half of the State was being maintained as reserved forests, that there existed large areas of swamps and *Eata* forests within those forests which were well suited for paddy cultivation, and that his prayer was for the assignment of such lands to the ryots for wet cultivation. Though the same subject had been repeatedly pressed at several sessions of the Assembly in the past, no final orders had yet been passed in the matter. When there were good lands by the cultivation of which all the paddy required for consumption in the State could be produced here, it was regrettable to see the importation of large quantities of paddy from outside year after year. The Director of Agriculture himself had stated that it was owing to the reservation of good paddy lands that they were compelled to import foreign paddy and that not even 10 per cent of the area fit for cultivation had been actually brought under the plough. In the reserved forests at Koni, which comprised about 400 square miles, there were vast areas which could profitably be converted into wet lands. The Forest Department might object to the assignment of the lands on the ground that the land-holders would interfere with the trees and set fire to the forests. But this objection, the Member said, was not tenable since the forest officers ought to take the necessary precaution to prevent ryots from tampering with the trees in any way. He observed that about 2,000 acres of land in the Ranni Reserve had already been brought under rubber cultivation by European planters, that there were other registered holdings in the Kumaramperur Reserve and that no harm had resulted from the owners of those lands. The Member, therefore, suggested that rather than leave the *Eata* forests and swamps within the reserved forests to themselves, it would be advisable to have them leased to the ryots on certain prescribed conditions for the cultivation of paddy, in return for which they might be asked to plant up teak trees over the area. Such a step, he said, would be immediately beneficial to the ryots and lucrative to the Government in the long run. He also stated that there were, besides the said lands, *Poramboke* lands situated on the borders of reserves which might also be assigned, and he requested a personal inspection of such lands by the Dewan. The Member concluded by saying that, at the last session of the Assembly when Mr. Ittiavira Thomas (Member, Peermade Taluk) brought forward the same subject, Government had promised that the question would be looked into and a Committee appointed for seeing whether it was feasible to throw open more lands from the Ranni reserve for paddy cultivation. He was not aware at what stage the matter stood. But he prayed that the question might be finally disposed of only after getting a report from a Committee composed of the Conservator of Forests, the Director of Agriculture, the Dewan Peishkar of the Division and two non-official members appointed for the purpose.

Dewan's reply.—The question of the appointment of Committees for investigating the possibility of throwing open more cultivable lands from the reserved forests is under the consideration of Government. The disposal of this question has been delayed on account of the correspondence between the Government and the Conservator of Forests. A decision is expected to be soon reached.

I shall go to Ranni and see for myself some of the places referred to by you. The system you refer to of leasing lands within reserves for temporary cultivation

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

and getting the lessees to plant up the area with teak trees in return, has already been sanctioned by Government, and will be tried in a few areas.

(3) Excise, Trade and Customs.

19. Certain defects in the Excise administration and suggestions for its improvement.

Mr. S. Subrahmanya Karayalar B. A. (Member, Shencottah Taluk) began by describing the present organisation of the Excise Department and suggested the possibility of reducing the 12 Excise Circles into which the State was divided into 5 in view of the improved means of communication available at present. In his opinion one Assistant Excise Commissioner would suffice for the Nagercoil, the Salt Factory and the Distillery Circles together; the existing railway communication would facilitate the amalgamation of the Trivandrum and Quilon Circles; an Assistant Excise Commissioner with headquarters at Quilon should be able to run the combined Circle; and a third Assistant Excise Commissioner might be placed in charge of the Alleppey and Arukutty Circles and the Parur taluk of the Alwaye Circle with headquarters at Arukutty. The Kottayam Circle might be abolished and the taluks of Kottayam and Changanacheri added on to the Kayankulam Circle (which might be called the Tiruvalla Circle) and the whole area entrusted to a fourth Assistant Excise Commissioner with headquarters at Tiruvalla; and the Piravam, Alwaye (except the Parur Taluk) and Muvattupuzha Circles together with the taluks of Ettumanur and Minachil might be constituted into a new Circle called the Muvattupuzha Circle and placed under a fifth Assistant Excise Commissioner with headquarters at Muvattupuzha, while the Devicolam Circle might with advantage be placed under the Devicolam Commissioner with powers to correspond directly with Government. Again, a Circle Officer and a Manager were unnecessary for the Excise Commissioner's office. All the Circles being thus placed under competent Assistant Commissioners, the Excise Commissioner should confine his attention to controlling and guiding the Department with little touring, if at all.

The Member next referred to the present method of recruiting executive officers in the Department from the clerical staff of the Secretariat and elsewhere and emphasised the need for appointing specially trained and really active men to such places. He advocated the institution of special examinations for the selection of competent men to hold executive posts, and stated that considerations of education, character and ability should weigh more than seniority in the matter of promotions. It should be possible for a really capable Inspector to become an Assistant Commissioner in due course and even the Commissionership should not be denied to him, if he was qualified for it educationally as well as in other respects; but a Petty Officer should on no account be permitted to rise above the rank of an Inspector.

Salt Administration.—Taking salt first, he thanked the Government for having carried out the suggestions put forward by him at the previous session of the Assembly in the matter of improving the condition of the Government salt factories. But it had to be remembered that the yield from those factories still represented only a fraction of the total output of salt in the State. Government were deriving annually from the licensees of the new factories an income of Rs. 1,50,000 in the shape of *melvaram* on 3½ lakhs of maunds of salt, over and above the duty thereon. If Government were prepared to spend but a year's profit on the new factories for bringing brine direct from the sea, the output would surely treble itself and the factories would be in a position to supply the needs of both Travancore and Cochin. The licensees too would not grudge contributing to the cost by paying a small cess on every maund of salt scraped. The Member then dwelt on the difficulties experienced by the licensees owing to the appointment of untrained men as Inspectors in salt factories and their frequent transfers and also adverted to the prayer made at the last session that Inspectors in salt factories might be given extra allowance and that they might not be transferred from the Salt Factory Circle. The salt industry in the State, he said, was in its infant stage and would die a premature death unless properly nursed. He was strongly against the importation of foreign salt

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly